

**Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology Board**

1422 HOWE AVENUE, SUITE 3, SACRAMENTO, CA 95825  
TELEPHONE: (916) 263-2666/ FAX: (916) 263-2668  
www.slpab.ca.gov



**DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS  
SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY AND AUDIOLOGY BOARD**

Medical Board of California  
1424 Howe Avenue  
Greg Gorges Conference Room "F"  
Sacramento, CA 95825  
(916) 263-2666

**SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY  
PRACTICE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES  
MAY 25, 2006**

**Committee Members Present**

Lisa O'Connor, M.A., Chairperson  
Carol Murphy, M.A.  
Diana Verdugo, M.S.

**Staff Present**

Annemarie Del Mugnaio, Executive Officer  
Lori Pinson, Staff Analyst  
Kathi Burns, Staff Analyst  
George Ritter, Legal Counsel

**Board Members Absent**

Jennifer Hancock, M.A.

**Board Members Present**

Alison Grimes, AuD  
Rebecca Binge, M.A.

**Guests Present**

Robert Powell, California Speech-Language-Hearing Association  
Robert Ivory, Audiologist, California Academy of Audiology

**I. Call to Order**

Chairperson O'Connor called the meeting to order at 2:40 p.m.

**II. Introductions**

Those present introduced themselves.

**III. Examine Curriculum from the Educational Therapy Certificate Program offered through Holy Names College and Discuss Issues Related to the Overlap in Professional Services Between Speech-Language Pathologists and Educational Therapists.**

Ms. O'Connor explained that there is a growing concern about the confusion between services provided by educational therapists and speech and language therapy provided by licensed speech-language pathologists. She stated that there are a number of reports of educational therapists who represent that they are qualified to identify and treat language disorders. Ms. O'Connor stated that the Board decided to research the educational therapy program curriculum to determine whether the training of educational therapists incorporates language assessments and intervention and by doing so, endorses unlicensed activity.

Ms. O'Connor reported on the prior research conducted by the Committee for each of the educational therapy training programs and indicated that one program in particular, The Holy Names program, listed course work dealing with language assessments for children. She directed the Committee to the printed website information and academic description indicating that Holy Names offers a certificate program along with a masters degree in education with minimal content directed toward treating language disorders. In fact, it appeared that the course related to language disorders was optional and could be substituted with a different course offering and still earn a masters' degree. Ms. O'Connor stated that at the last Committee meeting, Ms. Hirsch, retired speech-language pathologist who worked with the Holy Names institution, reported that she was in possession of a course syllabus from the Holy Names program documenting that the course on assessment in special education focused primarily on child language disorders and intervention and included learning outcomes that appear to be competency standards for speech-language pathologists.

Ms. Del Mugnaio advised that the Committee obtain the course syllabus to verify the information before considering any Board action.

Ms. O'Connor stated that she would obtain the course syllabus directly or from Ms. Hirsch.

Ms. O'Connor stated that much of the confusion regarding practitioner responsibility and authority stems from the changes in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the new proposed regulations (that are to be finalized Fall 2006) where the focus is moving away from categorizing children as requiring special education and instead applying a Response to Intervention (RTI) plan. The proposed regulations make reference to using resource specialists such as educational therapists and educational psychologists but do not specifically call for remediation services by speech-language pathologists.

Robert Powell commented that the California Speech-Language-Hearing Association (CSHA) did voice their concern over the exclusion of speech-language pathologists in the proposed federal regulations, however, it is unknown at this point whether speech-language pathologists will be added to the final regulatory language.

Robert Powell stated that with the current shortage of speech-language pathologists and the presence of educational therapists, school-aged children who suffer from language delays will likely be treated by educational therapists in an effort to provide some level of intervention.

Ms. O'Connor reiterated that today's discussion is directed at ensuring that the training programs provide adequate training and competence for educational therapists who may ultimately inherit the responsibilities of treating language disorders in children.

Ms. Del Mungnaio agreed that the Board's focus should be directed at ensuring that training programs provided adequate training to educational therapists, that parents be aware of the qualifications of the professional treating their child, and that educational therapists represent their qualifications and training appropriately to consumers so that consumers may make informed decisions when selecting a professional.

Ms. Del Mungnaio stated that CSHA representatives developed a consumer resource handout describing the various professionals who may serve school-aged children with language or learning disorders. She suggested that Board consider forwarding the article to the department for inclusion in the department's "Consumer Connection" newsletter.

The Committee discussed methods for educating the public regarding how to determine whether qualified personnel are working with their children to meet their individual educational needs. The Committee also discussed ways to engage in discussions with local school districts and parent teacher associations regarding "authorized" professional services.

#### **IV. Discuss Practice Issues for Speech-Language Pathology Assistants Working in Public School Settings.**

Ms. O'Connor stated that she is aware of certain school districts where the school administrators are not enforcing the Business and Professions Code provisions for speech-language pathology assistants (SLPAs) as they believe the schools are exempt from such laws and are only bound by the Education Code. Further she explained that due to the critical shortages of speech-language pathologists, the school districts are hiring SLPAs and assigning them full caseloads, which is in direct conflict with the laws and regulations governing the paraprofessional category. SLPAs are to be under the direction of a qualified speech-language pathologist who remains responsible and liable for all services performed by the SLPA. The Speech-Language Pathologist, who is the diagnostician, is responsible for developing all treatment plans.

Ms. Murphy reported a similar situation where she had been offered a job supervising SLPAs who were already employed by the school district and who had been given their own caseloads.

Ms. Del Mungnaio reported that she recently clarified existing SLPA provisions for a school district that had misinterpreted the SLPA regulations to authorize SLPAs to diagnose patients and establish treatment plans as long as the supervisor was aware that the SLPA was performing such duties. She stated this is obviously not the intent or meaning of the existing provisions. Ms. Del Mungnaio stated that she believes it's important for the Board to interface with SELPA administrators and other special education groups to educate these individuals on the proper employment responsibilities of an SLPA.

Mr. Powell stated that he intends to approach the Department of Education once the new IDEA federal regulations are in effect and request the Department to embrace and support the SLPA licensing system. He commented that not all of the decision makers of the Department of Education are in full support regarding the employment of SLPAs. He further stated that legislators support local control of education issues and may not be interested in relinquishing governance of any education setting to a licensing entity. Mr. Powell suggested that there should be more opportunity for discussion regarding employment of SLPAs and alleviating shortage problems once the new federal regulations are adopted and disseminated.

The Committee further discussed that the speech-language pathology profession is not unanimously in support of the use of SLPAs, which in and of itself creates problems in fortifying the work force and in educating potential employers.

Mr. Powell announced that Mary Huddler is the new Director of the Special Education Division of the Department of Education.

Ms. O'Connor stated that the Board should continue to seek out opportunities to meet with the Department of Education and SELPA administrators to discuss overlapping professional settings and the associated practice provisions.

**Ms. O'Connor adjourned the Committee Meeting at 3:15 p.m.**

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Annemarie Del Mugnaio, Executive Officer